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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 33rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MONGBE (Benin)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 98: INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION (A/48/219-E/1993/97 and Add.1, A/48/552; A/C.2/48/4, A/C.2/48/6)

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AGENDA ITEM 171: EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC REHABILITATION OF RWANDA (A/48/241)

1. Mr. ELIASSON (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs), introducing the reports of the Secretary-General on item 100 (A/48/392, A/48/504 and A/48/434), item 101 (A/48/473), item 105 (A/48/406), item 98 (A/48/219 and Add.1) and item 41 (A/48/323), said that as the full text of his introductory statement had been distributed before the meeting he would refer only to a few of the more important points in the reports and to information received after they had been issued.

2. With regard to Liberia, the Cotonou Peace Accord of 25 July 1993 had created conditions for more effective relief operations and for national reconstruction. The disarming of the contending factions stipulated in the Accord was essential for the conduct of the humanitarian activities, which were being obstructed by security and logistical problems. The humanitarian community generally had to cope with two kinds of problem - access and scarcity of resources. It was important for the necessary resources to be provided when the Secretary-General made his fourth appeal for funds for humanitarian assistance for Liberia.

(Mr. Eliasson)

3. In Somalia the situation required short-term assistance and rehabilitation measures and long-term development and reconstruction work. The fourth Coordination Meeting for Humanitarian Assistance for Somalia, to be held in Addis Ababa from 29 November to 1 December 1993, would offer a major opportunity for tackling the implementation of the assistance and rehabilitation measures over the next six or nine months and also for promoting long-term development. In the latter case, the Somalis themselves would have to show that they could provide the necessary security and begin to create the institutions needed for the future of their country, but it was also important for the donor community to demonstrate their support at the Addis Ababa meeting.

4. In Sudan there were also problems of access and resources. Where access was concerned, the fighting was continuing in the south, and Uganda had received more than 60,000 Sudanese refugees in the past three months. In the case of resources, the current enormous need for funds for emergency assistance programmes throughout the world made it difficult to provide the needed help. However, the dialogue with the Government of Sudan and the various factions of the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) on the problem of access had led to the establishment of humanitarian corridors for delivery of the aid, even though much still remained to be done. The principles established in Operation Lifeline Sudan and in the Addis Ababa Declaration of 9 April 1992 were very important for the humanitarian activities, and it was to be hoped that cooperation would continue with the Government and the other parties concerned so that access could be gained to the people in need of assistance. In resolution 46/182 the General Assembly had given the Secretariat some guiding principles for the provision of humanitarian assistance based on sovereignty, respect, non-interference and the consent of the affected country, but Member States had also undertaken to provide access to the people needing the assistance and had acknowledged the responsibility of Governments for their own people in that respect. It was a matter for satisfaction that the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Humanitarian Affairs, Ambassador Traxler, had been received in Khartoum and had also been able to negotiate with the SPLM factions in Nairobi.

5. Angola was still living through a nightmare period with regard to humanitarian assistance. The difference from the previous period was that it was now possible to see the conditions in places such as Cuito and Huambo, which had been isolated for a long time. The figures which had been put about in the past two or three months were probably correct; i.e. that there had been about 1,000 deaths a day. The fact that the Angolan tragedy had received less attention than the one in Somalia was due fundamentally to the fact that the communication media had not issued so many pictures of the victims. However, the parties to the conflict were now cooperating and access had been gained to Cuito, Huambo and other places which absolutely had to be helped. In other words, previously the problem had been access, now it was resources. Only $60 million had been received in response to the June appeal to Member States for $220 million. That had been understandable in the summer, for donors could rightly say that there was no access to the people needing the assistance, but now access was possible.

(Mr. Eliasson)

6. The Inter-Agency Task Force on Chernobyl was to meet shortly with the donor countries and with the relevant ministers of Ukraine, Belarus and the Russian Federation. Among the other effects of the disaster, Swedish citizens of Sami race living in Lapland had had to abandon an ancient culture owing to the radioactive rain which had fallen in the area, preventing them from continuing to gain their livelihood from the reindeer meat industry and converting their territory into wasteland.

7. In the efforts to alleviate the effects of the disaster there had been a shift from a large-scale approach with requests for funds totalling $600 million to a project-specific approach focused on priority areas, in particular health. Priorities had also been established for the projects already drawn up, and it was to be hoped that they would be implemented efficiently and that the United Nations would act as a catalyst for the activities of Member States and regional organizations and also of industry and non-governmental organizations. The important thing was to take a flexible approach to the issue based on criteria of efficiency and effectiveness.

8. However, the issues raised by the Chernobyl disaster were relevant not only to the past but also to the present and the future. The crucial problem was how to use and control nuclear technology. Chernobyl raised issues of nuclear wastes as well as of nuclear safety; i.e. the issues of what to do with the by-products of nuclear power and its use by the military, and where to store the residues, either to bury them underground or dump them at sea - and how to do all this and what the long-term effects would be. Fortunately, the new spirit of transparency and openness in the three countries directly affected offered a good opportunity to ensure that the open attitude with regard to the Chernobyl project was also applied to other absolutely vital issues, such as whether the international community was willing to take united action with regard to the use of a technology which could cause problems which lasted thousands of years, and whether it would be able to act with a genuine sense of its responsibility to future generations. For it must be remembered that the radioactivity in the Chernobyl area would take one or two thousand years to dissipate, and that meant that the question of the disposal of radioactive wastes must be tackled from a long-term standpoint.

9. With regard to the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, he said that, through some strange concatenation of events, in 1992 the increase in the effects of natural disasters had apparently been as large as in the case of man-made disasters. In 1991, losses due to natural disasters had amounted to $44 billion, and in 1992, to $62 billion, an increase of some 50 per cent. Of those losses, 89 per cent had affected developing countries and 80 per cent of the people who had died in those disasters had also been in developing countries. Moreover, those countries had the least insurance coverage for that kind of disaster. Furthermore, as was well known, most of the people who died in natural disasters did so in the first four or five days, which meant that every hour gained in rapid reaction made it possible to save dozens of lives. The importance of those figures was obvious. Accordingly, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs had assumed responsibility for the overall coordination of efforts to combat such disasters and was seeking to combine all resources and

programmes. It was also working intensively on preparations for the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction to be held at Yokohama (Japan) from 23 to 27 May 1994. That conference would provide an opportunity for a review of the first half of the Decade, for later inclusion in a report of the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly.

10. On Afghanistan, he said that unfortunately the 1992 rate of return of refugees had not been matched in 1993 when only 600,000 people had been repatriated. That figure had been offset, moreover, by the 600,000 newly displaced persons resulting from the fighting around Kabul. As though that was not enough, a cholera epidemic had broken out in various parts of the country, making the situation very discouraging. All that made it necessary to strengthen all the programmes in the country, but the 1992 appeal for $138 million had brought in only $47 million in the first nine months of 1993. That seemed to be a general trend, since under 50 per cent of the funds requested in consolidated appeals was currently being received. In the case of Afghanistan, it had been necessary to make a new appeal for $60 million in order to be able to finance the most essential programmes over the winter. It was to be hoped that that appeal at least would receive an adequate response, given the gravity of the situation there.

11. Lack of time had prevented the preparation of a report on Rwanda, but he recalled that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs had a programme for that country, where in February 1993 there had been more than 900,000 displaced persons, representing about 30 per cent of the population. In March, a fund-raising appeal had been launched for Rwanda, to which the international community had responded generously. Based on the peace agreement of August 1993, some 600,000 people had been able to return to their place of origin. Nevertheless, 300,000 people continued to live in refugee camps, which made it necessary to continue providing relief assistance.

12. In conclusion, he wished to review briefly a number of aspects common to all the reports before the Committee. Despite the current atmosphere of pessimism, United Nations humanitarian operations had achieved a degree of success wherever conditions had permitted. In Liberia, relief supplies were being distributed to those who needed them in all parts of the country. The spectre of mass starvation in Somalia had faded. In the Sudan, despite continuing problems, Operation Lifeline was able to reach many of those in need. In Afghanistan, the distribution of assistance, though hampered in the Kabul area, was continuing in other parts of the country, and even in Angola, humanitarian activities were continuing in the coastal and adjacent provinces. Success was, of course, a relative concept. Too many people had died and too many were still endangered, but it had at least been possible to avert what would have been human catastrophes of major proportions. In that context, tribute must be paid to those engaged in humanitarian activities in the field, many of whom, in Somalia, the Sudan, Angola and Afghanistan, had paid with their lives for their dedication to humanitarian assistance in the course of 1993. It was unacceptable that people engaged in humanitarian work should become the target, often the deliberate target, of violence. In that respect, it should be

(Mr. Eliasson)

remembered that the chief responsibility for protecting those people rested with the countries themselves.

13. Another common feature of the reports on the five countries was that they demonstrated the interaction between political security and humanitarian factors. To a great extent, emergency situations were the product of internal political conflict, and hence reconciliation was the only lasting solution. At the same time it was necessary to maintain the humanitarian imperative of providing assistance to all innocent victims in a neutral and impartial manner. Liberia, Somalia, the Sudan, Angola and Afghanistan also shared one of the grimmest characteristics of modern civil conflict: the indiscriminate and random planting of land-mines. In the immediate future, those mines posed serious obstacles to the distribution of relief supplies, as was currently occurring in Angola, but they continued to be a fatal legacy long after peace was restored. The time had come for the international community to seek an agreement for dealing with that problem and the resolution recently adopted by consensus in the General Assembly on assistance in mine-clearing operations was a heartening step forward in that direction.

14. Mr. JONAH (Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon (A/48/453), recalled that, beginning in 1978, the international community had resolved to take special measures to speed the reconstruction of Lebanon. In that same year, the General Assembly had established the programme of United Nations Assistance for the Reconstruction and Development of Lebanon (UNARDOL), which had become fully operational over the past few years, during which the scope and volume of its activities had increased. He recalled that Economic and Social Council resolution 1992/42 and General Assembly resolution 47/155 had called upon the programmes and organizations of the United Nations to intensify their assistance to Lebanon and take the necessary steps to ensure that their offices in Beirut were adequately staffed. In the past few years, additional United Nations organizations had established or reopened their offices in Beirut and other offices had been strengthened. For the first time since the end of the civil war, field operations had been initiated, with the participation of international personnel, and a number of projects had become operational. That had been made possible by the improvement of security conditions in Lebanon, which had permitted the relaxation of the restrictions which had been in place in some areas.

15. The two most recent reports of the Secretary-General on assistance to Lebanon noted the profound changes that had taken place in the country, changes related to the consolidation of the Government's authority, as well as other encouraging developments which made it possible to focus attention on the need for rehabilitation, reconstruction and development. More recent events in the Middle East had contributed to that trend. Their effect on Lebanon and the neighbouring countries would make itself felt as the peace process continued. Under the leadership of the UNARDOL Resident Coordinator, the United Nations had sought to provide maximum support to the Government of Lebanon in drawing up and implementing projects and programmes of reconstruction and rehabilitation. That

(Mr. Jonah)

support had extended to humanitarian assistance and emergency aid, the revival of institutions and the enhancement of their capacity and assistance in human resource development. In particular, the report provided information on the United Nations Inter-Agency Humanitarian Needs Mission, which had visited Lebanon in August 1993, in the wake of the intensification of armed conflict in southern Lebanon. The UNARDOL Resident Coordinator continued to be engaged in assisting the country's authorities in responding to the emergency situation in southern Lebanon and the west Bekaa. Among the most outstanding of the ongoing activities, mention should be made of the full reconstruction by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) of some 1,500 completely destroyed houses and the emergency repair of 1,000 partially destroyed houses belonging to economically disadvantaged families, which had received advance funding of $5 million from the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

16. The UNARDOL Resident Coordinator, in close cooperation with the United Nations field team, had undertaken initiatives and had increased cooperation between the peace-keeping operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and humanitarian and development assistance activities, with the objective of moving in a coherent and integrated manner from peace-keeping to peace-building. All parts of the United Nations system, including the World Bank group and IMF, had extended full support to the Resident Coordinator, and a strong and integrated programme was being developed. In particular, the World Bank had granted Lebanon a $175 million loan, the first one in the recent period, and the International Finance Corporation had granted a $45 million loan to commercial banks for onlending to industrial and tourism enterprises. Several United Nations agencies and programmes were also providing assistance to the Government of Lebanon in drug abuse control.

17. The UNDP Country Programme for Lebanon for the period 1993-1996 had been approved by the Governing Council of UNDP in February 1993. The country programme focused on three areas where the United Nations could make a distinct, high-level contribution, namely, institutional rehabilitation and development of public administration, social reconstruction, and promotion of balanced and equitable development. The UNARDOL Resident Coordinator had continued to exchange information and to sensitize donors, seeking to persuade them to finance and take part in United Nations system programmes and projects within the framework of the regular meetings of the local Donor Coordination Committee. Coordination at the field level was complemented by coordination at the central level.

18. Among the most recent developments, it was worth mentioning that in 1992, Lebanon had held its first elections in twenty years, and had elected a new Prime Minister. The programme of the new Government was emphasizing the achievement of the objectives of the Taef Agreement. The Government had set in motion a number of initiatives aimed at improving the economic situation. The attention of the Government was increasingly focused on the implementation of the Priority Rehabilitation Programme. Those advances must, however, be placed in the context of the severe economic and social problems which the Government had to confront as a result of the civil war.

19. Mr. ZUMBADO (United Nations Development Programme), introducing the report on the Special Plan of Economic Cooperation for Central America (A/48/405), observed that the overall objective of the Plan was to promote international cooperation in support of the establishment and maintenance of peace, democracy and development in Central America. Since the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly, when the previous report on the Special Plan had been submitted, important progress had been made in the region, including the signature of the Peace Agreement in El Salvador and the negotiations currently under way in Guatemala. By the same token, as a reaffirmation of their belief in democratic processes, four countries would be holding general elections in the next few months. The very fact that presidential elections continued to be held was evidence of the determination of the Governments and societies of Central America to seek regional solutions to shared problems. At the eleventh summit meeting, held in Tegucigalpa in December 1991, the Presidents had signed a protocol establishing the Central American Integration System, and had also signed the Tegucigalpa Commitment on human development, childhood and youth, as well as national action plans containing specific objectives and quantifiable goals for the relevant presidential terms. At the most recent summit, held in Guatemala on 28 and 29 October, the Presidents had signed a protocol on economic integration, and had decided that they would approve a protocol on social matters at the next summit, to be held in Costa Rica. Notwithstanding the progress made so far, continued efforts were needed to consolidate peace and democratic institutions in the region. In that regard, the main action would consist of measures to allow for the social reintegration of populations uprooted by conflict, taking effective steps to reduce the poverty and inequities affecting large sectors of Central American society, and ensuring sustained economic growth in the region which, according to ECLAC statistics, had amounted to 4.8 per cent in 1992.

20. The Special Plan continued to be implemented in accordance with the objectives and guidelines established by the six Central American Governments, the regional institutions, UNDP and other international organizations, and those cooperating at the bilateral level. In the case of UNDP, the Governing Council had initially authorized an additional $20 million as of January 1992, but because of the financial situation of UNDP, which had also affected other global programmes and projects, that allocation had been reduced by 30 per cent. The region continued to receive technical cooperation in connection with peace-keeping and assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons; agriculture development, infrastructure development, social development, environment and sustainable development, the strengthening of national institutions and Central American integration. In that regard, the most noteworthy aspects in 1993 had been the following: (a) UNDP had taken charge of the joint follow-up committee of the International Conference on Central American Refugees, signalling a transition from emergency to development; (b) following suggestions made by the Central American countries and the donor community, UNDP was collaborating in the establishment of a regional platform for human development at the local level; (c) UNDP had collaborated with the Permanent Secretariat of the General Treaty on Central American Economic Integration and the Central American countries in formulating a protocol on economic integration, and had provided support for the new Central American

institutions, and (d) UNDP had strengthened its commitment to collaborate with the Governments in the area of social reform, initiating the RUTA social project, which was receiving support from the Government of Japan through a World Bank revolving fund, as well as from the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Health Organization.

21. Since the beginning of the Plan, 71 technical cooperation projects had been approved for a total of nearly $138 million, 32.7 per cent of which was to be allocated from UNDP resources. Those resources were being depleted, and were expected to run out in 1994. In general terms, it was estimated that the Special Plan had mobilized an additional $1 billion for the region. In addition, investment and technical cooperation project portfolios had been established for a total of $2.3 billion in external resources. In his view, the Special Plan was an effective instrument for coordinating the assistance provided to the region, and had contributed to the establishment of peace and the promotion of dialogue in the region. He was therefore confident that UNDP, as well as the international community, would continue collaborating with each of the countries concerned, as well as with the region as a whole, in order to consolidate peace and democracy with human development, the goal to which the Central American peoples aspired.

22. He then introduced the report on assistance for the reconstruction and development of El Salvador (A/48/310), prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/158 of 18 December 1992. The willingness of the opposing sides in El Salvador to negotiate an end to their conflict had been applauded by the whole world; thus, the search for solutions to their differences had finally been taken to the political sphere, and the Chapultepec Agreements had been signed in January 1992, after a lengthy process of negotiations between the parties conducted under the auspices of the Secretary-General. In order for true national reconciliation to be possible, the causes of the war must be eliminated. During the two years that had elapsed since the signature of the agreements in January 1992, the Salvadoran people, with the support of the international community, had designed and begun to implement programmes aimed at eliminating the terrible human, social and economic consequences of the war, which had aggravated the serious structural crisis of El Salvador. There were a number of significant obstacles to be overcome, including the vulnerability of the new democratic institutions, the hostility and fear that persisted after a long history of violence and injustice, and a serious economic crisis. Although the foundations of the new peace were still fragile, economic stabilization and adjustment measures were being applied which were having a strong impact on social policies and standards of living. It was therefore important that the international community should strive to mitigate the tensions and dilemmas caused by macroeconomic policies while consolidating the peace process which, in the case of El Salvador, rested on two foundations: the National Reconstruction Plan and the strengthening of democratic institutions.

23. The aim of the National Reconstruction Plan was to promote national unity, in a climate of harmony, by rebuilding the economic infrastructure and the social fabric in the 115 municipalities and communities hardest hit by the

(Mr. Zumbado)

conflict (repatriates, displaced persons, residents of conflict zones, ex-combatants and the demobilized). The Plan was complemented by the creation and strengthening of the democratic institutions necessary for the thorough implementation of the principles of democratic participation and unlimited respect for human rights, the fundamental bases of the new Salvadoran State. The financial requirements for the National Reconstruction Plan (NRP) and the strengthening of El Salvador's democratic institutions for the period from 1992 to 1996 inclusive, submitted by the Government of El Salvador to the meetings of the Consultative Group in Washington and Paris in March 1992 and April 1993 respectively, amounted to $1,533 million. Seventy-six per cent of that was to finance the priority needs set out in the Plan, namely, activities derived from the Peace Accords related to the strengthening of democratic institutions and the reintegration of demobilized combatants into the economic life of the country, and projects designed to alleviate poverty within the framework of the NRP, and the remaining 24 per cent was for poverty reduction programmes outside the areas affected by the conflict. Of the total financial requirements, the Government of El Salvador had promised to provide $403 million and the donor community, at the meetings of the Consultative Group, had promised the sum of $597.5 million. Therefore more international support was needed in order to meet the remaining needs.

24. Although the international community had shown itself to be fully committed to the peace process taking place in El Salvador, it was essential to move forward with greater speed and purpose regarding financial contributions and project approval so that more progress could be made in the various programmes connected to the Peace Accords. As the Secretary-General had pointed out in his letter addressed to the participants in the meeting of the Consultative Group, the success of the programmes to which the Government of El Salvador attached priority and for which it had requested finance was an essential element in the construction of peace. Following the Peace Programme proposed by the Secretary-General, the United Nations system had functioned in an integrated way in order to modify gradually the political, socio-economic and environmental factors which formed the bases of conflicts.

25. Mr. ATTIGA (Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Arab States, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)), introducing the reports of the Secretary-General on "Assistance to Yemen" and "Assistance for the Reconstruction and Development of Djibouti" (A/48/320 and A/48/319) said that Yemen was going through a period of major social and economic problems as a result of the unification of the country, the influx of returnees following the Gulf crisis and the continuous flow of refugees from the Horn of Africa. The General Assembly had acknowledged the gravity of the problems when it had adopted resolution 47/179 on 22 December 1992. However, since then the difficulties got worse and the country continued to face negative economic growth, compounded by high trade and current account deficits and rising inflation.

(Mr. Attiga)

26. Following the establishment of the new Government, UNDP and other agencies of the United Nations system had been able to implement their programmes through specific projects and activities. The round-table process had been reactivated and a second meeting was being prepared which would provide the Government with the opportunity to discuss with its partners the new vision of the development process in the country and the financial resources needed for its implementation. UNDP, together with IMF, was also preparing a programme for strengthening economic and financial management in the country, designed to stabilize the macroeconomic environment through policy and administrative reforms and to lay a solid foundation for the achievement of sustainable and equitable growth. Furthermore, it was supporting the Government in its efforts to rehabilitate and privatize public enterprises in the southern part of the country so as to solve the problem of the burden created by that sector on public finances. UNDP and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) were negotiating with the Government their engagement in the development of a free trade zone which would help to integrate the Yemeni economy into the world economy.

27. As for Djibouti, as a result of its precarious financial situation and its trade dependency on neighbouring countries, it was facing numerous social and economic problems which were exacerbated by the continuing conflicts in the Horn of Africa and by natural disasters. In February 1993, the UNDP Governing Council had approved the country programme for Djibouti, which focused on the development of human resources and social services. However, the implementation of the programme had been delayed by the recent disturbances in the north of the country. United Nations agencies were actively participating in the preparation of an action plan of assistance for the refugees in Djibouti. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was to launch two voluntary repatriation operations to Ethiopia and the north of Somalia and thanks to the special assistance of the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNDP and the Government of France, it had been possible to stop the cholera epidemic which had affected over 7,000 people in the outlying areas of the capital. Nevertheless, much was still required in the areas of sanitation, medical training and laboratory equipment. UNICEF was carrying out an expanded programme of immunization and nutrition and the World Food Programme was carrying out an active emergency assistance programme for Somali and Ethiopian refugees and for the rural population of Djibouti. The United Nations and other bodies taking part in development activities must provide greater and better coordinated support for Yemen and Djibouti to enable the two countries to overcome the difficulties confronting them.

28. Mr. HELMKE (Director of the Division for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation and assistance to alleviate the consequences of war in Croatia and to facilitate its recovery (A/48/534), said that although there had been a widespread increase in hostilities in Croatia the United Nations system had made practical efforts to alleviate the hardship experienced by the civilian Croatian population and

(Mr. Helmke)

refugees in that country. In 1992 UNDP had launched in all the republics of the former Yugoslavia a series of small-scale projects designed to make humanitarian assistance more effective. The initial resources provided by UNDP had been used to mobilize significant additional resources from bilateral donors and the programmes had been supported by the specialized agencies of the United Nations system. The United Nations Office in Vienna (UNOV) and the UNDP non-resident coordinator for the former Yugoslavia had assumed the role usually played by country offices. Encouraged by the experience gained through such activities, UNDP had assembled a small group of experts to develop practical programmes through which the multilateral system could contribute to post-conflict peace-building. The programmes were characterized by the following elements: (a) they should deal in a parallel way with economic recovery and the establishment of peaceful relations between various ethnic groups in order to break the vicious circle which had locked them into an interrelationship; (b) grass-roots organizations must be used to implement them, the community should participate in a direct way and the programmes would depend largely on the work of volunteers; (c) incentive systems should be built into them so that contributions to the rehabilitation of community infrastructures would be rewarded with assistance for the reconstruction of individual dwellings, and (d) they should include measures to reconstitute and strengthen the social fabric of local communities. In that context activities to enhance the professional capabilities of representatives of each segment of the communities would be essential, since in that way the communities would be empowered to resolve conflicts between the various groups of which they were composed, including ethnic and religious groups.

29. In that connection, there had been a few positive signs in recent months in relations between Serbs and Croats, such as talks for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of hospitals, houses and water-supply systems, and the execution of specific activities under the United Nations reconstruction programme. Likewise, with additional funds provided by the Government of Austria, schemes had been launched based on community work in exchange for building materials for the reconstruction of individual homes; UNOV and the non-governmental organization CARE-Austria were setting up a system for the purchase and hiring of materials and tools at low cost; in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, women's help schemes were being carried out, and in the Zagreb area, the Bosnian and Herzegovinian Women's Organization was running a scheme for visits to war victims and abandoned elderly people.

30. Referring to the appeals launched under the auspices of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and UNHCR, he said that UNOV and UNDP had mobilized the greater part of the resources for the programmes mentioned in the Secretary-General's report and were pursuing their efforts to collect more funds so as to sustain their activities through contributions from donor countries. The activities carried out in Croatia pursuant to General Assembly resolution 47/166 were helping the United Nations system to apply a new criterion for devising humanitarian aid programmes. The new approach, through which it was hoped to move from peace negotiations to peacemaking and post-conflict

peace-building, represented a ray of hope for the civilian population participating in the programmes, which was both the innocent victim of war and the principal resource for peace.

31. Mr. VAN DE CRAEN (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union and referring to agenda item 105, said that the European Union was carrying out both joint and bilateral activities to mitigate the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. The initial activities focused mainly on aspects of nuclear safety and scientific research into the after-effects of the disaster. Likewise, the States members of the European Union had undertaken a wide range of bilateral aid programmes for the victims of Chernobyl relating, inter alia, to agriculture, food and health. The importance the countries and peoples of western Europe attached to assisting the victims of the catastrophe was borne out by the numerous humanitarian aid programmes being carried out by European non-governmental organizations and private groups.

32. The European Union had taken note of the shift in emphasis recommended by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, which had consequently launched an appeal for a financial study on the various projects to be carried out in the three countries most seriously affected by the Chernobyl disaster. None the less, the European Union considered that further resources for specific projects should be mobilized through bilateral or multilateral channels, including the non-governmental and industrial cooperation organizations. The United Nations Secretariat and in particular the section of the Department dealing with matters relating to Chernobyl, did not have a specific mandate allowing it to develop its own aid policy for the victims of nuclear disasters. Nevertheless, the Department could continue to play a catalysing role in the United Nations system with due regard for comparative advantages.

33. The Secretary-General had laid down the responsibilities of the Secretariat with regard to nuclear disasters. The European Union wished to stress that, in the case of Chernobyl it was the long-term consequences of an event which had occurred several years earlier that were being dealt with, and thus the criteria applied should not be the same as for recent disasters. In the acute phase of a disaster on the scale of Chernobyl, it was essential to pool resources as far as possible so as to ensure the most efficient results. However, where long-term activities were concerned, the United Nations system must operate by allocating tasks according to the specific fields of competence of each body. For those reasons, the European Union considered that the funding of activities should first and foremost be examined by the administrative bodies of the relevant United Nations agencies, thereby enabling donors to establish priorities among requests relating to a specific sector.

34. The European Union expressed solidarity with the most seriously affected countries, especially with regard to the human and social aspects of the disaster. Solidarity among European countries had come to the fore following the Chernobyl disaster and would be sustained in the future. He believed that regional solidarity would be more widely demonstrated as the long-term

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consequences of disasters were dealt with. He considered that the Economic Commission for Europe was the most appropriate body in the United Nations to take up the matter.

35. Mr. KRUEGER (Austria) said that, in an increasingly interdependent world, the consequences of wars, civil strife and natural and man-made disasters required the assistance of the international community, particularly in the case of natural disasters, given the vulnerability and limited resources of the developing countries and small nations.

36. Referring to agenda item 169, he said that the implementation of economic and trade sanctions in pursuance of various Security Council resolutions had highlighted the urgent need for assistance to alleviate the adverse effects such sanctions had on third States. A case in point was the high cost of sanctions imposed in the efforts by the international community to resolve the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. For instance, the embargo had the following consequences for Austria: first, it disrupted trade relations with its traditional suppliers of coal and iron ore due to delays, greater transport risks and costs; second, it increased transport costs, delayed delivery times, resulted in market losses for the manufacturing industries already confronted with tough competition; and third, it caused serious harm to the Danube transport industry.

37. Austria firmly supported the application of the sanctions. However, it was important to remember that for some of the States adjoining Serbia and Montenegro, as well as for other countries in the region, the sanctions had represented a threefold burden: the interruption of transport and communication links, economic difficulties which already existed as a result of the costly process of political, economic and social transition, and the financial outlay to cover the costs of monitoring and control of the implementation of the sanctions. He recalled that in its resolution 843 (1993), the Security Council had confirmed the mandate of the Committee established under resolution 724 (1991) to examine requests for assistance, submitted in accordance with Article 50 of the Charter, from States facing special economic problems as a result of the implementation of the sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro. Likewise, the Security Council had subsequently endorsed the recommendations made by that same Committee concerning Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Uganda and Ukraine, and had invited Member States and the organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations, including international financial institutions and regional development banks, to provide assistance to those States.

38. His delegation considered that the issue warranted thorough examination; moreover, in order to provide assistance to the most seriously affected States pragmatic solutions were required that would take due account of the responsibility of the State at which the sanctions were targeted, which should be the first to compensate for any losses. Furthermore, the possible arrangements with the Bretton Woods institutions and their assistance programmes and facilities should be considered with a view to providing the affected

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countries with assistance which would enable them to tackle the economic problems resulting from the implementation of the embargo against Serbia and Montenegro.

39. Mr. BIAOU (Benin), speaking on agenda items 98 and 100, said in relation to the former that Benin, which periodically suffered from floods and drought, felt a deep concern at the increase not only in the numbers of victims of natural disasters, but also in the number of such disasters every year. He therefore fully supported the aims of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, believing that international cooperation was an essential back-up to national, regional and world-wide activities in that field; if it was to be effective and appropriate it should both meet the reconstruction needs that arose following a disaster and facilitate the implementation of national prevention programmes aimed at reducing the effects of future disasters, within the International Framework of Action for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.

40. The United Nations system, too, should help countries which were struck by disaster, either regularly or occasionally. Thus, before proceeding to the mid-term review of the aims of the International Decade, there should be an identification of the priorities for action by the international community in such countries, an assessment of the assistance actually received by them since the International Decade had begun, an evaluation of the needs still unmet and practical proposals for dealing with them effectively. Such assessments, which had been called for in General Assembly resolution 47/159, had still not been carried out in Benin's case, and the Secretary-General should submit a report on the matter at the forty-ninth session.

41. Meanwhile Benin looked forward to the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, to be held in Yokohama from 23 to 27 May 1994, and supported the convening of a preparatory meeting in Geneva to consider organizational and procedural questions, the programme of work and other related issues. In that connection it would be appropriate if the preliminary documents could be sent to the participants in their respective working languages before the preparatory meeting and the Conference.

42. With regard to the special programmes of economic assistance, he said, in his capacity as representative of the Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), that Benin attached particular importance to the programme of humanitarian aid to Liberia. In that connection, he agreed with the Secretary-General that the signing of the peace agreement at Cotonou on 25 July 1993 would greatly facilitate the emergency relief operations for those in need. At the same time, the speedy application of Security Council resolution 866 (1993), which had established the Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), would strengthen both the efforts for peace and the operations of the United Nations and ECOWAS. In that connection, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Benin had told the General Assembly on 29 September 1993 that the establishment of UNOMIL would be possible only if there was a move by the international community to support the efforts of ECOWAS, particularly by

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contributing to the special trust fund. Such contributions would help the African States to send reinforcements to the Military Observer Group (ECOMOG), would help to maintain the forces assigned to ECOMOG by the participating States, would allow mine clearance, humanitarian assistance and development to be carried out and help the electoral process to follow its proper course.

43. Lastly, he said that his remarks regarding Liberia applied equally to Somalia, Angola, Mozambique, the Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi and other countries which needed a climate of peace which would be conducive to reconstruction, rehabilitation and development.

44. Mr. SARSOUR (United States of America), speaking on agenda items 100, 101, 102 and 171, said with regard to agenda item 100 that economic reform, while essential for the success of democratization efforts in Yemen, would impose hardships on the Yemeni people in the short run. The United States therefore urged all nations to support Yemen as it worked to create a free market economy. Such support could include financial and other assistance to help cushion the impact of the economic institutions necessary for reform to succeed.

45. With regard to agenda item 101, his country considered that the establishment of a cease-fire and a negotiated settlement to consolidate democracy and economic recovery in Angola should be a high priority for the international community. In the fiscal year that had just ended the United States had provided $59 million in assistance to Angola, including food, medicine and logistical aid to facilitate delivery of emergency commodities; it expected to contribute a similar amount in the current year. His country had re-established diplomatic relations with Angola following the elections supervised by the United Nations under the Angola Peace Accords. It called on all parties there to implement a cease-fire, return to negotiations sponsored by the United Nations and participate in the peaceful reconstruction of Angola.

46. With regard to agenda item 102, the United States encouraged Member States to participate in all aid operations to support the extraordinary efforts of the Salvadorians to implement the peace accords brokered by the United Nations. The National Reconstruction Programme which the Salvadorian Government was carrying out alongside the economic reform programme was the key to the successful implementation of the peace process and deserved significant international support. In the fiscal year ended 30 September the United States had provided $218 million in economic assistance to El Salvador and planned to continue providing such aid, including support for the presidential elections scheduled for March 1994.

47. With regard to agenda item 171, the United States had deep sympathy for the hardship which the people of Rwanda had endured during the recent period of conflict. It therefore hailed the signing of the Arusha Peace Agreement as a crucial first step in the political and economic recovery of Rwanda. He hoped that the people of Rwanda would put aside the differences that had had such a tragic effect on their country and on the region, since the success of the process was crucial to regional stability. In addition to supporting the peace-

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keeping mission in the Security Council, the United States had provided over $50 million for cease-fire monitoring operations, disaster assistance and development aid. Rwanda faced many challenges, including demobilization, refugee repatriation and reconstruction. The United States looked forward to an eventual round table on demobilization, sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and to an appeal by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

48. Mr. VOZNYAK (Russian Federation), speaking on agenda item 105, said that although seven years had passed since the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant it continued, unprecedented as it was, to be the object of public attention and scientific research, owing to the fact that people were still dying from radiation, that vast expanses of land were still unfit for any economic activity and, lastly, that such accidents constituted a serious warning to humanity.

49. Over those years the Russian Federation, Belarus and Ukraine had, with the support of the international community, made efforts to mitigate and minimize the consequences of the accident. Thus a state programme - the Children of Chernobyl programme - had been established and implemented in the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation had also signed a special agreement on Chernobyl with Belarus and had set up a cooperation and interaction mechanism, known as the Standing Meeting of Plenipotentiaries on Chernobyl and on other problems of radiation protection and safety. A special fund had been established under the agreement and it had been decided to fund, in equal shares, a joint stock company to oversee the final stage of constructing a medical products plant in Belarus. In 1993, the Russian Federation had given Belarus financial assistance to eliminate the consequences of the accident and to treat in Russian hospitals critically ill patients from the territories in Belarus that had been affected. Furthermore, a major, detailed national outreach programme had been approved and implemented to protect the people of the Russian Federation from the consequences of the Chernobyl accident over the period 1992-1995 and up to the year 2000; it was currently focused on the rehabilitation of the contaminated land and the social welfare of its inhabitants.

50. The programme to resettle the population in safe areas had been pursued as far as was practicable. Approximately 50,000 people had already been resettled and the process had virtually come to an end. Another 2.7 million people, however, continued to live in territories contaminated by radioactivity, a circumstance which made it necessary to ensure State control over the medical surveillance and treatment required by the affected population, as well as the early detection of cancer-related diseases when there was a high probability of a cure. In the case of Belarus, for example, particular attention was paid to thyroid diseases among children, which was a direct indication of radioactive iodine poisoning as a result of the Chernobyl catastrophe. Thus, special imported medical equipment, medicines and qualified specialists were required at the current time.

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51. In addition, long-term State programmes had been adopted in 1993. One was the State programme of the Russian Federation on radiological rehabilitation in Ural region and the adoption of measures to support affected populations; another was the State programme for the rehabilitation of the population and economic and social development of the territories in the Altai region, which was affected by radiation as a result of nuclear tests at the Semipalatinsk testing grounds. The Russian Federation was shouldering a heavy financial burden of more than 600 billion roubles allocated to three national programmes, including 500 billion roubles for the Chernobyl programme, and it was therefore very grateful for international aid. In 1993, it had signed with the Inter-Ministerial Nuclear Safety Committee of France a cooperation agreement for the study of the consequences of radiological accidents and the exchange of experiences in the management of post-accident situations. A similar agreement was expected to be signed between the Governments of the Russian Federation and the United States of America, and consultations on that subject were being conducted with Japanese, Belgian and Italian colleagues. For the third consecutive year, the Russian Federation had been successfully working with Germany on the Chernobyl problem and the Ural programme. The UNESCO-Chernobyl programme and the four-party agreement between the Commission of the European Communities, Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine had also been successfully implemented.

52. Nevertheless, international activities on such a complex problem as that of Chernobyl required coordination by the United Nations and, in that connection, the Russian Federation had great hopes for the work being done by the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Coordinator for International Cooperation on Chernobyl, who had demonstrated a new approach to multilateral action on Chernobyl. Thanks to that approach, a definite improvement had already been noticed in the activities of United Nations agencies, such as WHO, IAEA and UNESCO, which had traditionally been involved with the Chernobyl problem. Efforts had also been stepped up to develop and implement projects of the Russian Federation in cooperation with UNIDO, the Economic Commission for Europe and other relevant organizations.

53. In evaluating the report on the strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl accident, the Russian Federation supported the new approach which consisted in promoting multilateral interaction on issues related to Chernobyl, taking into account the priority needs of the countries most affected, focusing on the pragmatic determination of the sources of financial support and arrangements for project implementation, and taking into account the comparative advantages of the international organizations. The report was positively distinguished from previous documents on the same subject by its deeper analysis of the problems of international cooperation in the area under consideration, as well as by its innovative approach to their solutions. It was extremely important that in practical work the main emphasis should be on projects which could bring about practical results and were most likely to attract financial backing. In that connection, his delegation considered that it would be useful for the United Nations to intensify its work on the implementation of the

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resolutions adopted earlier by the General Assembly and continue its close contacts with the Commission of the European Communities and other organizations involved, in addition to making further efforts in the area of multilateral and bilateral cooperation.

54. Bearing in mind the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and of the numerous other catastrophes, both natural and man-made, which had occurred in its territory, the Russian Federation fully supported the objectives and tasks of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, appreciated the work being done by the United Nations system in connection with the Decade, and considered that work to be an important component of the wide-ranging activities of the United Nations in the field of emergency humanitarian assistance. His delegation commended the activities of the Scientific and Technical Committee on the International Decade, which were being carried out in accordance with the priorities of its programme of work. Of particular note was the practical value of the analyses carried out by the Committee on the subject of economic advantages and costs of preventive actions, and its recommendations to Governments and to the private sector in that regard. In that connection, the Russian Federation looked forward to the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, which would be held at Yokohama, Japan, in May 1994, and was ready to participate actively, together with other countries, in preparations for the Conference.

55. In conclusion, the Russian Federation agreed on the importance of the elaboration and implementation, under United Nations auspices, of special programmes of economic assistance designed to rebuild economies and restore normal living conditions to populations affected by the adverse and destructive consequences of natural catastrophes. The Russian Federation was participating, to the extent it was able, in the economic reconstruction efforts of a number of the countries whose situation was under discussion.

56. Mr. HOTOVCHITZ (Ukraine) said that, after more than seven years, it was clear that the Chernobyl disaster and its consequences, which had drastically changed the attitude of the international community towards the problem of the use of nuclear energy, could not be circumscribed within a limited quantitative or temporal framework. Even today there was no certainty about all the consequences of that disaster on the health of the population, and its direct and long-term sociological repercussions remained unclear and unpredictable.

57. Ukraine recognized that the international community had respected quickly to its request for assistance. At the bilateral level and within the framework of the United Nations, prompt action had been taken to mobilize international efforts to study and minimize the consequences of the disaster, and the question of assistance to Ukraine and its neighbours, Belarus and the Russian Federation, had received adequate attention in the agenda of the previous three sessions of the General Assembly, as well as in other international organizations. One hundred and twenty Member States of the United Nations had voted in favour of resolution 45/190, and a number of programmes had been established to assist the victims of the disaster. Nevertheless, that vigorous humanitarian response to

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the disaster by the international community had recently given way to inertia and routine, which was a matter of grave concern. That was partly due to the fact that not all the programmes were directly related to the current needs of the affected region, nor were they always geared to the achievement of the rapid and tangible results which the population needed. The programmes, moreover, did not always take account of national programmes and organizations. The entire situation had been compounded by the absence of institutional arrangements for centralizing financial assistance. Furthermore, given the less-than-generous response to appeals for voluntary contributions since the establishment of the Trust Fund for the Decade, it had become quite clear that the various forms of humanitarian assistance would not be able to resolve all the problems, particularly in view of the deterioration of the economic situation in Ukraine.

58. His country was aware that additional complications might arise in international relations as a result of the moratorium on the construction of new nuclear power plants as well as the confusion created by the fact that the Chernobyl nuclear power plant was still operating. Ukraine was aware of the difficulty and responsibility involved in that painful decision that its people had had to take as a result of the country's critical need for energy. Needless to say, Ukraine considered that international assistance to resolve the problem of Chernobyl was not meant to determine or replace the country's own efforts to that end but to supplement them. Thus, in recent years, the Government of Ukraine had made strenuous efforts to implement a comprehensive national programme designed primarily to secure various types of assistance for the victims of the disaster and to overcome its worst consequences for the environment and for future generations. A Ukrainian radiation measurement centre had been established, there was an extensive network of specialized medical institutions and 24 scientific centres were carrying out research on the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of radiation-related diseases. As a result of the laws adopted to protect doctors and those affected by radiation, hundreds of thousands of people were currently receiving specialized treatment and other types of care.

59. Regarding the national programme for the Chernobyl disaster, he said that his Government, which was facing enormous economic difficulties during the transition, was obliged to allocate as much as a fifth of the national budget to deal with that problem. Even so, Chernobyl had posed such complex economic, environmental, scientific and psychological problems that it was simply impossible for any one country or even all three affected countries by themselves to resolve them. In that connection, it should be borne in mind that as a result of the presence of radioactive substances in the atmosphere over 40,000 square kilometres of Ukrainian territory had been contaminated; that affected 2,300 inhabited areas and 2.6 million people, including 650,000 children. Medical treatment related to the disaster was needed for more than 3 million Ukrainians. Seven years of research had unfortunately confirmed the long-term forecast with respect to the effects of the disaster on the general health of the country's population. During the period 1987-1988 it had been estimated that 53 per cent of the children living in the contaminated area were healthy, whereas in the period 1991-1993 only 27 per cent of the children were

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considered healthy. Although Ukraine acknowledged the international assistance it had received in that sphere, it trusted that the Chernobyl problem would continue to attract the interest of United Nations Member States in future, and perhaps the interest of non-governmental organizations and national and international financial institutions. Chernobyl could be considered as an experiment where the capacity of the United Nations programmes to respond to emergency situations arising in the world was being tested. That unique experience in international cooperation should definitely be used in the future for the benefit of all States and with a view to protecting mankind and the environment from such disasters.

60. His delegation noted with satisfaction that a more decisive approach was being taken towards solving the Chernobyl problem through the identification of the specific needs of the people of the region. In that connection, he expressed his gratitude to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and his staff, whose efforts had resulted in the recent activation of the United Nations Trust Fund for Chernobyl and more comprehensive information on the activities of the relevant agencies and the members of the working group, and had made it possible to work out new strategies.

61. In May 1993, Mr. Eliasson had visited the affected regions and later participated in a coordination meeting held at Minsk with the ministers of the affected States. At the coordination meeting to be held shortly in New York, his delegation would report on the measures adopted and propose some new projects that were in keeping with the guidelines for Ukraine's action in that area, including: the provision of medical treatment for victims, especially children and those who had helped to contain the disaster, and medical examination of the population; removal of people from all the contaminated zones, and provision of all the necessary social services; socio-psychological rehabilitation of the population; rehabilitation of agriculture and production of uncontaminated food.

62. He expressed support for the new division of labour between the United Nations and the other international agencies referred to by Mr. Eliasson. The United Nations was very well placed to coordinate assistance aimed at finding a solution to the problems. While new approaches were required to strengthen cooperation, the consideration of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster should not be restricted to Europe as the representative of Belgium had suggested; since the disaster had taken on global proportions, it would be desirable to benefit from the experience gained by the United Nations which could keep the question under consideration.

63. The strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster should be appropriately reflected in the mass media. He therefore suggested that on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, appropriate documentation and programmes should be prepared including exhibitions of photographs, radio reports, video films, etc., on the disaster, highlighting efforts made by the international community to mitigate its impact.

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He hoped that the international community would respond in an effective, concrete manner to the request for assistance made by Ukraine and the other States affected by the Chernobyl disaster.

64. Mr. ABU OUF (Sudan) said that there were gaps in the report of the Secretary-General on emergency assistance to the Sudan (A/48/434) resulting from the time-lag between the preparation of the report and its presentation to the General Assembly. If the important developments that had taken place since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 47/162 had been taken into account, the picture of the situation presented by the report would have been positive instead of negative. In order to fill in those gaps, he would focus his comments on the policies of and the action taken by his Government, on their outcome and impact, and on the prospects and needs for 1994.

65. In the first place, assisting all needy people in all parts of the country was primarily the responsibility of the Government of the Sudan which was committed to making every effort to achieve that goal; his Government therefore welcomed the assistance of the United Nations and the international community in support of its own endeavours to assist the needy. While emergency assistance was necessary and vital to save lives, his Government firmly believed that the best solution to the suffering was a negotiated peaceful settlement to the conflict in the south: to that end, it had negotiated with the various rebel factions in Nairobi, and particularly in the context of Abuja I and II with the good offices of Nigeria, and had now welcomed the initiative of the countries of the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda) to mediate between the various parties to the conflict, within a purely regional context and with appropriate machinery. Pending the achievement of a peaceful settlement, emergency assistance should address all the components of the continuum of relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development, whose indivisible nature was stressed in the report of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations (A/48/536).

66. With regard to developments that had taken place since the previous session of the General Assembly, the principal issues relating to the emergency situation in the Sudan in the past few years had been the necessity of improving efficiency and effectiveness of operations through enlarged access to the needy, better coordination and cooperation within the United Nations system and with non-governmental organizations, and reduction of costs. With a view to improving the effectiveness of relief operations the Sudan had signed various agreements, including: (a) the agreement concluded in December 1992 between the Government and the various rebel factions, negotiated in Nairobi by the Department for Humanitarian Affairs, whose objective was to increase the effectiveness of Operation Lifeline Sudan, through greater access and safety for relief personnel and supplies; (b) the agreement concluded between the Government and the non-governmental organizations operating in the Sudan, brokered by the Department for Humanitarian Affairs, whose objective was to build an atmosphere of confidence and cooperation through the streamlining of administrative procedures, greater participation by non-governmental

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organizations, and improved transparency and accountability; (c) the memorandum of understanding signed in March 1993 by the Government and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to clarify basic cooperation between the two parties for the sake of the victims of the conflict. Lastly, in August 1993 the Government had received Ambassador Traxler, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, whose mission had been to review, with the Government, the implementation of the various agreements.

67. The agreements had indeed helped to make relief operations in the Sudan more effective, and to consolidate cooperation among the Government, the United Nations, ICRC and the non-governmental organizations. Among the specific results of those agreements were: (a) an increase of more than 100 per cent since 1991 in the delivery of food to the southern Sudan; (b) an increase of more than 200 per cent since 1992 in the number of sites where the United Nations administered relief operations; (c) the streamlining of administrative procedures for clearing flight schedules, and for obtaining visas and stay and travel permits for personnel of the United Nations, ICRC and the non-governmental organizations; (d) greater participation of the latter in operations and improved coordination with other participants; (e) the entry of ICRC into southern Sudan, and (f) the signing of an agreement between the Government and WFP to increase the use of tugboats and barges, thereby taking advantage of cheap river transport, and a similar agreement with Sudan Railways to increase the frequency and capacity of rail trips to the south.

68. Many problems nevertheless remained: the fighting among the various rebel groups, which dislocated civilian populations, obstructed relief operations, and threatened the safety of relief personnel; the unavailability and unpredictability of resources placed constraints on the ability to respond to the pressing needs of the region and seriously hampered recovery and rehabilitation tasks, as well as the provision of logistical support, two areas crucial to ensuring that emergency situations did not recur.

69. Closer coordination was required between the offices of the coordinator in Khartoum and the sub-office in Nairobi, and between them and Headquarters in New York and Geneva; that would improve coordination with the Government and reduce the number of such irregularities as the use of relief aircraft to transport rebel groups and to bring journalists and parliamentarians into the country illegally, illegal cross-border operations, and other acts that infringed on national sovereignty.

70. Given the ample agricultural production of 1992 in the Sudan, the General Assembly had that year emphasized the need to direct assistance towards meeting non-food requirements and supplying logistical support. The picture for 1993 and 1994 was still not clear; the Sudanese Government was awaiting the results of the joint FAO/WFP crop assessment and the Basic Needs Assessment Mission, before holding the necessary consultations with the United Nations and donors and then formulating an appropriate response. The Sudan was grateful for the assistance provided to date by the United Nations Department for Humanitarian Affairs, the relevant programmes and agencies, donors and non-governmental organizations and ICRC.

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71. Emergency operations in conflict situations were very complex, and should be handled with extreme care, respecting the sovereign authority of Governments. International assistance must target not only relief needs, but also rehabilitation and development tasks. In the process of responding to emergencies, special attention should be paid to strengthening governmental institutions as well as local non-governmental organizations that dealt with emergencies, and to strengthening disaster prevention and preparedness in disaster-prone countries.

72. Mr. CAMARA (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), referring to agenda item 98, said that in late 1992 there had been a desert locust upsurge in the coastal strip around the Dead Sea; and that, despite the aerial and ground control operations mounted in all affected countries, the 1993 upsurge had spread eastwards into Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, Pakistan and India, and westwards through the Sudan, Mauritania, Senegal and southern Morocco as far as the Anti-Atlas Mountains.

73. While in southern Mauritania and northern Senegal the situation was critical, in India and Pakistan the locust control campaigns had considerably reduced the infestations. Some swarms were likely to reach western Algeria, but their scale was not likely to be large. By contrast, if any were produced in Senegal, they were most likely to move towards Guinea-Bissau and Guinea and then across the Sahelian zone, where they might cause some damage to fruit trees but no major damage to crops. Any escapes that originated from summer breeding in India and Pakistan were likely to move next into Baluchistan, in Pakistan, and perhaps into Baluchistan Seistan in south-eastern Iran and into Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

74. The range of emergency action taken included: the reconstitution at FAO of the Emergency Centre for Locust Operations (ECLO), as well as the reconstitution in many of the affected countries of the national coordinating committees, to facilitate contacts with donors at the national and international levels; an appeal by the Director-General of FAO for additional emergency assistance for desert locust control, which had raised $19.3 million; and treatment by means of chemical and aerial control operations of about 1.8 million hectares in 12 countries. FAO was monitoring the situation closely; if necessary, it would call for further resources from the donor community. It would also adopt a series of resolutions appealing to donors to increase assistance to African countries, and asking the Director-General to convene meetings for the mobilization of resources for the winter and spring campaigns and for preparations for the summer campaign.

The meeting rose at 6:15 p.m.